

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : J. Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

DATE: March 24, 1949

FROM : [REDACTED] Office of Alien Property

Attn: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Personal Property of Otto Kuehn

Mr. Tolson
Mr. Clegg
Mr. Glavin
Mr. Ladd
Mr. Nichols
Mr. Rosen
Mr. Tracy
Mr. Egan
Mr. Gurnea
Mr. Harbo
Mr. Mohr
Mr. Pennington
Mr. Quinn Tamm

We have received a letter from our Honolulu Office stating that the Honolulu Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation had received a radiogram from your Washington Office stating that a Washington attorney had applied to you concerning passports and other papers of Otto Kuehn, a German national, which papers have been vested by this Office.

The manager of our Honolulu Office informed your Honolulu Office that he would forward the requested papers to us. These papers have now been received in Washington.

We shall be glad to discuss this matter with you or, if you prefer, to have you refer the Washington attorney in question to us. This case is being handled by [REDACTED], H.O.L.C. Bldg., Extension 574. Please make your reply PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL to the attention of [REDACTED]

65-1574

RECORDED - 57 65-1574-306
FBI
APR 20 1949

EX-100

RECEIVED
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 8-28-86 BY 8801/105

Mr. E. A. Tamm
Mr. Clegg
Mr. Glavin
Mr. Ladd
Mr. Nichols
Mr. Rosen
Mr. Tracy
Mr. Egan
Mr. Gurnea
Mr. Harbo
Mr. Mohr
Mr. Pennington
Mr. Quinn Tamm
Mr. Nease
Miss Gandy

Date: August 11, 1948

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. D. M. Ladd

From:

Re:

BERNARD JULIUS OTTO KUEHN, was
ESPIONAGE - G and J

As a result of an investigation conducted by the Bureau, the subject, a German national residing on the island of Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands, was convicted by the Military Commission sitting in Honolulu and found guilty on February 21, 1942, of unlawfully obtaining information affecting the national defense and disclosing such information to the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu. He was sentenced by the Military Commission to be shot to death. However, on October 26, 1942, the Military Governor of the Territory of Hawaii, although approving the sentence imposed by the Commission, commuted Kuehn's sentence to confinement at hard labor for fifty years and ordered him to be confined at the U. S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. (Serial 283)

After the subject had been confined at Leavenworth, Kansas, for a considerable period of time, he was released from that institution and in September of 1946 was transported to the Immigration Station, Ellis Island, New York City, where he awaited transportation to Germany.

By copy of an order dated July 23, 1946, signed by the Attorney General it was learned that the subject was ordered deported from this country. I thought you would be interested in knowing that the New York Office has now advised the Bureau that the officials in Ellis Island, New York City, informed the New York Office on July 29, 1948, that they had received orders from the Attorney General to parole the subject. The Immigration officials indicated that Kuehn would be paroled some time that day. However, the address to which he was going was not known at that time.

DE-INDEXED
DATE: 4-20-51
22

This is astounding.

65-1574
(Other sources - 288 and 292)

100-101950 77

RECORDED - 73

65-1574-3074
JUL 5 1950
37
Ken

THIS MEMORANDUM IS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSES
TO BE DESTROYED AFTER ACTION IS TAKEN AND NOT SENT TO FILES

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO :

DATE: 3/18/54

FROM : MR. NICHOLS *ZB Mc*

SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF PRISONER'S MAIL

Bernard E. Kuehn

Bulky Exhibit File Number: 65-1574-275

Mr. Tolson	_____
Mr. Ladd	_____
Mr. Nichols	_____
Mr. Belmont	_____
Mr. Clegg	_____
Mr. Glavin	_____
Mr. Harbo	_____
Mr. Rosen	_____
Mr. Tracy	_____
Mr. Mohr	_____
Mr. Trotter	_____
Mr. Winterrowd	_____
Tele. Room	_____
Mr. Holloman	_____
Miss Holmes	_____
Miss Gandy	_____

We are presently in the process of reviewing all bulky exhibits presently on hand, in order that we may weed out those which will serve no useful purpose by being retained. Inasmuch as a great many of these bulky exhibits pertain to inactive cases and are occupying badly needed space, it is requested that you have the appropriate substantive supervisor review the above-listed bulky exhibit and render a decision as to the retention or disposition of the material contained therein. A notation as to the decision rendered should be placed on this memorandum, and it should be returned to the Filing Unit of the Records Section, room 1113, Identification Building. This memorandum will be filed in the case file.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the above-listed bulky exhibit be reviewed and a decision rendered as to the retention or disposition of the material contained therein.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-28-86 BY SP5CJ/CS

RECORDED - 43

EX - 107

58 APR 7 1954

XXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXXFEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET2

Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

- ☒ Deleted under exemption(s) b6 b7c with no segregable material available for release to you.
- ☒ Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to you or the subject of your request.
- ☐ Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.
- ☐ Document(s) originating with the following government agency(ies) _____, was/were forwarded to them for direct response to you.

_____ Page(s) referred for consultation to the following government agency(ies); _____ as the information originated with them. You will be advised of availability upon return of the material to the FBI.

_____ Page(s) withheld for the following reason(s):

- ☐ For your information: _____

- ☒ The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:
65-1574-367

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 X NO DUPLICATION FEE X
 X FOR THIS PAGE X
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : 

DATE: 7/1/54

FROM : L. B. NICHOLS *Ymmy*SUBJECT: BERNARD JULIUS OTTO DUEHN
ESPIONAGE *K*

Bulky Exhibit File Number: 65-1574-299

We are presently in the process of reviewing all bulky exhibits presently on hand, in order that we may weed out those which will serve no useful purpose by being retained. Inasmuch as a great many of these bulky exhibits pertain to inactive cases and are occupying badly needed space, it is requested that you have the appropriate substantive supervisor review the above-listed bulky exhibit and render a decision as to the retention or disposition of the material contained therein. A notation as to the decision rendered should be placed on this memorandum, and it should be returned to the Filing Unit of the Records Section, room 1113, Identification Building. This memorandum will be filed in the case file.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the above-listed bulky exhibit be reviewed and a decision rendered as to the retention or disposition of the material contained therein.

Retain Bulky
7/1/54
RSB

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 8-28-80 BY *SP-6*

RECORDED-95

EX-1

65-1574-309
JUL 16 1954

Mr. Tolson _____
Mr. Ladd _____
Mr. Nichols _____
Mr. Belmont _____
Mr. Clegg _____
Mr. Glavin _____
Mr. Harbo _____
Mr. Rosen _____
Mr. Tracy _____
Mr. Mohr _____
Mr. Trotter _____
Mr. Winterrowd _____
Tele. Room _____
Mr. Holloman _____
Miss Holmes _____
Miss Gandy _____

RECEIVED-1113

1324

Sept 6

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Nichols

DATE: November 28, 1956

FROM : [REDACTED] b6 b7c

SUBJECT: Bernard Julius Otto Kuehn

There are attached excerpts concerning the above-captioned case taken from "The FBI Story, A Report to the People," by Don Whitehead published by Random House, 1956. These excerpts are from page(s) 190, 193, 344 of the book.

The full text of the book may be found in the FBI Library.

Enclosure

/ ENCLOSURE

#26874
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 8-28-86 BY SP-10

66 MAR 12 1957
f354

65-1574-✓
NOT RECORDED
MAR 11 1957

65-1574
CRIME RECORDS
[Signature]

#268714
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED

HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 8-28-86 BY SP8CJ/CLs

EVEN as the oily black clouds of destruction mushroomed above the shattered fleet at Pearl Harbor, a thin spire of gray smoke was rising from the yard of the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu. This smoke came from a small fire tended by Consul General Nagao Kita and his Vice Consul, Atojiro Okuda. They were burning the Consulate's secret code books and the messages which had passed between Kita and Foreign Minister Togo in those last days before treachery reached its flaming climax.

Nagao Kita. It's a name to remember in the espionage of World War II. If any man can be named as the most effective enemy agent in the Pearl Harbor attack, it was Kita. Behind the curtain of diplomatic immunity he supplied Tokyo with a running account of last-minute ship movements in and out of Pearl Harbor. And now that the blow was struck, he was trying to destroy the evidence.

But paper in bulk burns slowly. While the flames at the Consulate were being fed by Kita and Okuda, Special Agent in Charge Shivers asked the Honolulu Police Department to place a guard at the Consulate. The guard saw the papers being burned. He rushed in and grabbed a code book and a bundle of messages from the protesting Japanese. The papers were turned over to Shivers, who gave them to the Navy to decode, along with Consulate messages obtained from the commercial communications companies—messages which had been denied to the FBI until the Japanese struck.¹

When Shivers saw the uncoded messages, he exclaimed to another agent, "My God, if we'd had these earlier! Look at this!" And he handed the messages to the agent:

*0245 (1) "PA"

3 December, 1941

FROM: KITA

TO: FOREIGN MINISTER, TOKYO

(Secret Military message No.) (By Chief of Consulate's Code).

To: Chief of Third Section, Naval General Staff

From: FUJII

Re signals I wish to simplify communications as follows:

1. Code (following 3 section 8 line table)

1. Battle force, including scouting force, are about to put to sea—
2. Several aircraft carriers plan to put to sea.
3. All battle force has sailed 1st-3rd dates inc.
4. Several aircraft carriers have sailed (1st to 3rd)
5. All aircraft carriers have sailed (1st to 3rd)
6. All battle force have sailed, 4th-6th dates inc.

Page 190 of "The FBI Story,
A Report to the People" by
Don Whitehead

65-1574 - ✓

ENCLOSURE

7. Several aircraft carriers have sailed (4th to 6th)
8. All aircraft carriers have sailed (4th to 6th)

2. Signal

Light in Lanikai beach house at night—

One light from 8 P.M. to 9 P.M. indicates "1". From 9 P.M. to 10 P.M. indicates "2". The below signals until midnight, in order to indicate 3 and 4. Two lights, according to the time, indicates 5, 6, 7, 8. When not in accordance with (lights) above 1 full automobile headlight and one half light indicates 1, 2, 3, 4. Two full lights indicate 5, 6, 7, 8.

2. On the Lanikai coast during daytime from 8 A.M. until noon every hour 1 piece linen cloth (sheet) indicates 1, 2, 3, 4. Two pieces linen cloth indicate 5, 6, 7, 8.

3. In Lanikai bay during daytime in front of harbor (offing) a star boat with one star on sail indicates 1, 2, 3, 4; a star and "III" indicates 5, 6, 7, 8.

4. Light in dormer window of Kalama house from 7 P.M. to 1 A.M. every hour indicates 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. . . .

December 3, 1941

FROM: FOREIGN MINISTER
TO: KITA, CONSUL, HONOLULU

STRICTLY SECRET

WOULD LIKE YOU TO HOLD ON YOUR LIST OF CODE WORDS (ALSO THOSE USED IN CONNECTION WITH RADIO BROADCAST) RIGHT UP UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE. WHEN THE BREAK COMES BURN IMMEDIATELY AND WIRE US TO THAT EFFECT.

TOGO

December 5, 1941

FROM: KITA
FOREIGN MINISTER, TOKYO

1. The three battleships mentioned in your X239 of Friday morning, the 5th entered port. They expect to depart port on the 8th.
2. On the same day the LEXINGTON and 5 heavy cruisers departed.
3. The following warships were anchored on the afternoon of the 5th:
 - 8 Battleships
 - 3 Light cruisers
 - 16 Destroyers

Coming in were 4 cruisers of the Honolulu type and 2 destroyers.

KITA

December 6, 1941

FROM: TOGO, FOREIGN MINISTER
TO: CONSUL, HONOLULU

PLEASE INFORM US IMMEDIATELY OF ANY RUMORS OF THE MOVEMENTS OF WARSHIPS AFTER THE 4TH.

TOGO

Page 191 of "The FBI Story,
A Report to the People" by
Don Whitehead

Here was evidence of espionage. The message sent by Kita to Tokyo on December 3 proved that Kita had arranged for someone to signal Japanese submarines and give them information on the American fleet. And the finger of suspicion pointed to Bernard Julius Otto Kuehn as Kita's confederate because Kuehn had a house at Lanikai, a house at Kalama with a dormer window and a boat with a star on the sail.

Otto Kuehn, a German national, had first come to the FBI's attention in 1939 because of persistent rumors that he had an abnormally large income for a man with no profession or known business connection. Such talk gets around in a community the size of Honolulu. And it was no secret to the FBI that Kuehn had deposited more than \$70,000 in a Honolulu bank from 1936 to 1939. He had once been a member of the Nazi Party.

Kuehn explained to friends that his income came from family inheritances, but in tracing the money the FBI began to suspect it had come to Kuehn from Japanese sources in Berlin. These suspicions increased when the Army advised the FBI that the Japanese Consul General was known to have asked his Foreign Office for an opinion on the reliability of a couple in Hawaii named "Friedell."

The FBI could find no one named "Friedell." But agents noted that Mrs. Kuehn's first name was Friedel, spelled with one "l." This similarity in names seemed more than coincidence in view of the fact that the Army's tip came a short time after Mrs. Kuehn's return from a trip to Tokyo.

Still, there was no tangible evidence of espionage by Kuehn until the Consulate messages had been translated. Then Kuehn confessed. He admitted he was the source of the code for signaling to the submarines, but he claimed it was never used so far as he knew.

Kuehn told agents:

... It was also arranged [with Kita] that this same set of signals could be given by short wave radio and arrangements were made that if the Consulate desired to contact me they could do so by sending me a postcard signed "Jimmie," to my Box No. 1476 at Honolulu . . . On the same occasion that I transmitted this simplified system of signalling I had also advised the Consulate that there were seven battleships, six cruisers, two aircraft carriers, forty destroyers, and twenty-seven submarines, or some similar figure, in Hawaiian waters . . .

Kuehn also told of receiving some \$30,000 in 1940-1941 from sources in Tokyo, money which he claimed represented transfers from property income in Germany. He said the last \$14,000 payment was handed to him by a strange Japanese, and that his wife hid all the money.

"I don't know where she has it hidden," Kuehn said. But there was

testimony indicating that the stranger who gave Kuehn the \$14,000 was Vice Consul Okuda's associate, Consulate Secretary Tadasi Morimura.

A military commission operating under martial law listened to Kuehn's story and then sentenced him to be shot to death "by musketry." However, the sentence was later commuted by the military governor to fifty years at hard labor.*

Kuehn was one of ninety-one persons convicted of spying against the United States from 1938 to 1945. And the shame of it was that sixty-four of them were American citizens betraying their own country. The greater number worked for the Hitler government because of loyalty to Germany. A few others were mere adventurers. A few were recruited by threats of death or injury to loved ones held by the Nazis. A few became enemy agents because they saw a way to make easy money.

*Excerpt from page 193 of
"The FBI Story, A Report
to the People" by Don Whitehead*

* Kuehn served at Leavenworth Penitentiary from December 1, 1942, until June 6, 1946, when his sentence was commuted in order to deport him to Germany. He was confined at Ellis Island, New York, until his parole was ordered on July 29, 1948. He voluntarily departed from the United States to Buenos Aires, Argentina, on December 3, 1948.

Excerpt from page 344

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : MR. TOLSON

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE: October 24, 1958

FROM :

SUBJECT:

Friedel Kuehn; Ruth Kuehn

Tolson _____
Belmont _____
Mohr _____
Nease _____
Parsons _____
Rosen _____
Tamm _____
Trotter _____
W.C. Sullivan _____
Tele. Room _____
Holloman _____
Gandy _____

For record purposes, [redacted] of the "Indianapolis Star," Washington office, advised that one of the editors of his paper in Indianapolis had come across Bernard Julius Kuehn in Indianapolis and had checked into Kuehn's background and wanted to do a little rehash of this old case.

The Kuehn case was an espionage case in Honolulu involving a former German naval lieutenant, Bernard Julius Otto Kuehn, 39 years old, his wife, Friedel, and daughter, Ruth, who, while living in Honolulu, were in contact with the Japanese and who received payments of money from the Japanese for arranging various signals which consisted of utilizing lights, beacon fires, and clothing displayed at prominent positions which could be observed by the Japanese two-man submarines, which signals would indicate the strength of the United States fleet at Pearl Harbor. It is recalled that on November 17, 1941, Kuehn took to the Japanese Consulate a set of 17 signals which would show the operations of the American fleet. The high command in Tokyo considered the system too complicated so on December 3, 1941, Kuehn submitted a new signal plan which met with Japanese approval. The Kuehns were arrested on December 8, 1941, and at the time of apprehension Mrs. Kuehn had secreted on her person \$5,000 in \$100 bills. She had also placed in the lining of her window curtains an additional \$2,000 in \$100 bills. The Japanese had made payments of more than \$40,000 to the Kuehns in a period of a year and a half. The Kuehns were tried before a military commission in Honolulu charged with espionage in February, 1942, and Kuehn was sentenced to be executed by a firing squad but the sentence was later commuted to confinement at hard labor and Kuehn was thereafter incarcerated in the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. Kuehn's wife and daughter were ordered interned in the United States for the duration of the war and were repatriated to Germany in 1945.

[redacted] has been furnished background material on this case, which was popularly known during the early days of the war as "The Case of the Lights in the Dormer Window."

1-Mr. Belmont

EX-135

REC-9

OCT 27 1958

CRIME REC

XXXXXX
XXXXXX
XXXXXXFEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FOIPA DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET2

Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

- ☒ Deleted under exemption(s) b6 b7c with no segregable material available for release to you.
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- ☐ Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.
- ☐ Document(s) originating with the following government agency(ies) _____, was/were forwarded to them for direct response to you.

Page(s) referred for consultation to the following government agency(ies); _____ as the information originated with them. You will be advised of availability upon return of the material to the FBI.

Page(s) withheld for the following reason(s):

☒ For your information: 3rd party information

☒ The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:
65-1574-312

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 X NO DUPLICATION FEE X
 X FOR THIS PAGE X
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

UNITED STATES

MENT

Memorandum

TO :

DATE: 6-14-60

FROM :

SUBJECT:

INFORMATION CONCERNING
BUFILE 65-1574

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 8-28-86 BY SP5CJ/CK

Tolson _____
Mohr _____
Parsons _____
Belmont _____
Callahan _____
DeLoach _____
Malone _____
McGuire _____
Rosen _____
Tamm _____
Trotter _____
W.C. Sullivan _____
Tele. Room _____
Ingram _____
Gandy _____

ACTION: The above information is being directed to the attention of
the Nationalities Intelligence Section.

1
1
1

Liaison

68 JUL 12 1960

REC-90

JUL 7 1960

EX-108

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
Memorandum

Parsons ☒
Belmont ☒
Callahan ☒
DeLoach ☒
Mohr ☒
McGuire ☒
Rosen ☒
Tamm ☒
Trotter ☒
W.C. Sullivan ☒
Tele. Room ☒
Ingram ☒
Gandy ☒

TO : **MR. TROTTER** *6.6.3.*

DATE: 8-3-60

FROM : [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: **OTTO KUEHN**
ESPIONAGE - J.

#268712
**ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 8-28-86 BY SP5/CLF**

CW
[REDACTED] assigned to Fort Holabird, Maryland, came to Identification Division today. He said he is writing the history of the Otto Kuehn espionage case for Army training purposes. He said he was looking for the original transcript of Kuehn's court trial. He was unable to locate it at the U. S. District Court, Honolulu, Hawaii. He wondered whether the arrest record of Kuehn would show what court he was tried in.

Kuehn's identification record, FBI #3 143 763, shows he was received at U. S. Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kansas, December 1, 1942, from "Military Commission, Honolulu, Hawaii." I checked Bureau file on Kuehn and found he was tried before a military tribunal in Hawaii in 1942.

[REDACTED] was grateful for the information and said he would check Army records to try to find the court transcript. I reminded him Don Whitehead's book, "The FBI Story," related some of the details of the Kuehn case. He said he had a copy of the book at home.

ACTION:

For record.

Bu file 65-1574.

(5) *to*
1 - Mr. Belmont

57 AUG 16 1960

REC-78

874
65-1574-314

12 AUG 12 1960

NAT. INT. SEC.

UNITED STATES

GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Director, FBI (65-1574)

DATE: 7/25/62

FROM : SAC, Honolulu (65-4)

SUBJECT: BERNARD JULIUS OTTO KUEHN, aka
ESPIONAGE - J

Mr. Tolson
Mr. Belmont
Mr. Mohr
Mr. Callahan
Mr. Conrad
Mr. DeLoach
Mr. Evans
Mr. Malone
Mr. Nichols
Mr. Rosen
Mr. Sullivan
Mr. Tavel
Mr. Trotter
Tele. Room
Miss Holmes
Miss Gandy

Enclosed is news item which appeared in the 7/24/62 edition of the "Honolulu Star-Bulletin" and which reports subject's wife, Mrs. FRIEDEL KUEHN, now residing in Germany, is instituting a suit against the United States Government in amount of \$27,000 as "compensation for seizure and auctioning of their Hawaii property in 1945." It was noted she has engaged a Washington, D. C., attorney.

In 1944 the Office of Inspector General, U. S. Army, conducted detailed investigation on basis of allegations made by Mrs. KUEHN, then a repatriate to Germany, to the Legation of Switzerland and transmitted to the U. S. Department of State.

The disposition of the KUEHN real property in Hawaii was handled by the Alien Property Custodian.

2 - Bureau (Enc)
1 - Honolulu

ENCLOSURE

REC-22

FBI - HONOLULU

FBI - HONOLULU
REC'D - HONOLULU
JUL 25 1962

JUL 25 1962

JUL 25 1962

JUL 25 1962

JUL 25 1962

JUL 25 1962

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Widow of Man Convicted as P.H. Spy Sues U.S.



Mrs. Friedel Kuehn

Otto Kuehn

By JOHN FIEHN

TIRSCHENREUTH, Germany, July 24 (AP) — Mrs. Friedel Kuehn, widow of Nazi spy Otto Kuehn, convicted by the U.S. for collaborating with the Japanese in laying plans for the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, is seeking her husband's vindication.

In 1942 a military court at Honolulu sentenced Kuehn to death but the sentence was commuted to 50 years in prison. He was sent to Ellis Island for deportation in 1947, chose to go to Argentina from where he returned to Germany in 1955.

Bernhard Julius Otto Kuehn died in 1956 of cancer in a German hospital. He was 61.

Mrs. Kuehn, a broken woman of 70 living on a \$30 a month German old-age pension, also wants to receive

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

Page 1

HONOLULU STAR-
BULLETIN

Honolulu, Hawaii

Date: 7/24/62
Edition: 4-star
Author: John Fiehn
Editor: William Ewing
Title: BERNARD JULIUS
OTTO KUEHN

Character: ESPIONAGE - J
or

Classification:
Submitting Office: HONOLULU

#268714
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DATE 9-16-86 BY SP8/LLK

65-1514

ENCLOSURE

\$27,000 from the U.S. government. She says, this is the money the U.S. Government got from auctioning Kuehn's property in 1945.

"My husband was a spy that never was," she said in an interview in this small country town barely five miles from West Germany's border with Communist Czechoslovakia.

She charged that high officers of the U.S. Navy at Hawaii used Kuehn as a scapegoat to cover up for what she called "extreme laxity in preparing against the Japanese sneak attack."

Mrs. Kuehn, tall, sinewy and chain smoking, said her family broke up as a result of persecution by the F.B.I., which handled the Kuehn case.

Her daughter Ruth and son Eberhard live in the United States. Ruth Kuehn's marriage with J. Carson Moore broke up. She married again. Son Eberhard's marriage also went on the rocks, she said.

'FALSELY ACCUSED'

"This is all because my husband was falsely accused and convicted," she said.

Mrs. Kuehn said another son, Hans Joachim, age 30, tried to commit suicide twice in May this year and was subsequently put in an asylum. She is attempting to secure his release.

"For 10 months after our arrest by the F.B.I., Hans Joachim was put in the care of an evil man who taught him nasty things. He never recovered from the harm done him then," Mrs. Kuehn charged.

"I demand compensation from the U.S. Government for all that has happened to us," she said, adding that a Washington lawyer is handling her case. She would not disclose his name.

Kuehn was convicted on charges of having co-operated with Japanese consular officials at Honolulu in spying out the position of the U.S. fleet in Pearl Harbor. He was also alleged to have arranged a special signal system from the window of houses at Kalama and Lanikai, apparently to direct Japanese enemy dive bombers.

'ALL ROT'

He was reported to have received at least \$14,000 from the Japanese.

"All rot," Mrs. Friedel Kuehn said 21 years afterwards.

"First of all, we weren't Nazis. We left Germany because we hated the Hitler dictatorship. That's why we went to Hawaii."

"My husband resigned his naval commission under the Nazis. He was an intelligence officer while in the navy but that was all over once he had quit the service," she said.

She said her husband's family had been wealthy. Kuehn's father was a professor of chemistry at Stettin. Otto Kuehn tried his hand in free-lance journalism after leaving the German Navy.

"But we had too much money, Otto really didn't have to work," Mrs. Kuehn said.

The entire Kuehn family was taken by surprise when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, she said.

"I was standing before the mirror in our dressing room combing my hair when the attack came," she said.

"In the mirror, opposite the open window, I saw the planes dive and come up again. They looked like hornets buzzing all over the sky."

"My table radio was going full blast. Suddenly the jazz music program was interrupted. They are attacking—they are attacking," the announcer cried. The jazz music was continued."

She said she thought the Navy was carrying out a mock attack exercise.

"I couldn't believe anyone would play jazz while the fleet was ripped to pieces, while thousands died."

RUSHES HOME

Her husband rushed home, scared, she said, by the detonations. He had taken their youngest boy to Sunday school.

Later that day, the Kuehns joined in administering help at a Red Cross station. She said she gave shelter to 12 persons made homeless by the attack.

SHIPPED TO MAINLAND

The next day, the entire Kuehn clan was taken into custody.

"From that day until 1955, I did not see my husband again," she claimed. She and her husband were submitted to "third degree" interrogations by F.B.I. agents, she said.

"I will never forget it. One day, the prison guards arranged a special meal for me and my husband. We both were in solitary confinement in a Honolulu jail. They told us this was our last meal and we might as well enjoy it because we were to be executed the next morning."

After her husband's secret trial, she was shipped to the U.S. Mainland and kept in internment. In 1944 she was repatriated to Germany with her son Hans Joachim, aboard the Swedish liner Gripsholm, she said.

She charged that her elder son, Eberhard, was forcibly kept in the United States although, under the articles of the Geneva Convention, a minor should not be separated from his mother.

"They even pressed him into the Army and made him fight in Korea. I haven't seen my son since those days in Hawaii," she said.

"If my husband was guilty, why wasn't he executed?"

she asked. "Why was he released after serving only five of the 50 years to which he was sentenced?"

"While Otto was on Ellis Island awaiting deportation, he tried to stay in the United States. He failed. I advised him to go to Argentina rather than return to Germany because there are too many Americans around here and they would never have stopped bothering him. They didn't want him to tell the true story," Mrs. Kuehn said.

CRIES FREQUENTLY

She frequently cried while recounting her version of the Kuehn family's fate. Within two hours, she paced through a pack of cigarettes while chain-smoking and coughing.

Pictures of herself and her husband, a young handsome officer in the imperial German Navy, decorated the walls of her small, two-room apartment in a lower middle class tenement. Paint was flaking off the walls.

Tenderly she stroked two thick folders containing clippings and hand-written notes by her husband.

"He compiled that material on his case while in Argentina. He wanted to write a book. He was too sick to get down to doing it, though."

Fading photos of her children were on a desk in the sparsely-furnished apartment. A stale kitchen smell mixed with cigarette smoke.

"A lot of nonsense has been written about us Kuehns, don't believe it," she said.

She said all she wants now is to have the Kuehn family name cleared of the "false charges" brought against her husband.

"I don't want the money," she said. "All I intend to do is to recover the money for my children."

She refused to disclose the American addresses of her children because "they've suffered enough from bad publicity," she said. "Leave them in peace."



This is the building where the widow of Otto Kuehn lives in Tirschenreuth, Germany, near the Czechoslovak border.

Kuehn Flashed Position of U.S. Fleet to Japan

Otto Kuehn not only supplied Japan with information about the fleet at Pearl Harbor three days before the December 7, 1941, attack, but he confessed to the F.B.I. that he did so, according to

Office of War Information disclosures made in 1943.

A light in a dormer window reportedly transmitted the vital signals.

Kuehn, a German, is also reported to have boasted to

F.B.I. agents that he was so high in the Nazi Party that he was once considered for the position of chief of the German Gestapo under Heinrich Himmler.

Today Kuehn's widow

denies her husband was ever a spy, as she seeks \$27,000 compensation for seizure and auctioning of their Hawaii property in 1945. Star-Bulletin files of the war

years tell a different story.

Kuehn and his wife were apprehended on December 8, 1941, and he was sentenced to be shot February 21, 1942, by a military commission in Honolulu.

Later the sentence was commuted to 50 years at hard labor.

It was not until June of 1943 that details of the secret trial were revealed.

According to a United Press report from Washington at that time, Kuehn confessed to the F.B.I. that he approached Japanese Vice Consul Otojiro Okuda sometime in November, 1941, and offered to assist the Japanese in obtaining information regarding United States defenses.

Okuda reportedly accepted and Kuehn, accompanied by his 10-year-old son, Hans Joachim, went to Pearl Harbor and made observations.

SIGNAL SYSTEM

"A few days later, he went to the Japanese consulate and submitted a signal system which he had worked out which could be used by the consulate in furnishing information regarding number and types of American ships in Pearl Harbor, as well as data about ships that had already left or were about to leave," the Office of War Information report said.

The signals included a display of light in the windows of houses owned by Kuehn and his wife at Kalama and Lanikai. The house at Kalama had a dormer window in the attic built specifically for signaling purposes. (Exact details on who received the signals were not revealed.)

The O.W.I. said Japanese officials thought Kuehn's original system of signals too complicated and Okuda, according to the F.B.I. report, told him to come back with a simpler system.

NUMBER OF SHIPS

"He (Kuehn) also handed to Okuda a written tabulation of the number and types of American ships then in Hawaiian waters," the O.W.I. said.

"The F.B.I. reports that on or about October 25, 1941, \$14,000 in cash had been delivered to Kuehn at his residence with the dormer window by Tasasi Morimura, fourth secretary of the Japanese consulate, the O.W.I. also said.

Kuehn, who served in the German Navy during World War I, had come to Honolulu in 1935, allegedly to study the Japanese language. He never went back to Germany, but made two trips to Japan during the next four years.

And during his first three years here, more than \$70,000 was deposited to his credit in a Honolulu bank by a Rotterdam bank association.

OPENS BEAUTY SHOP

Despite these deposits, Kuehn is reported to have been in financial difficulties in 1939 and his wife's daughter opened a beauty shop. This was later said to have been opened mainly to obtain Navy business.

Mrs. Kuehn went to Japan in 1940 and reportedly brought back \$16,000 in cash.

Kuehn was purportedly in the metal furniture business here, and the Kuehns entertained frequently and had a reputation for hospitality. He was also reportedly a nightly frequenter of downtown bars, where he spent money lavishly.

He frequently wrote letters to Honolulu editors in which he defended the pro-Nazi

French government of Pierre Laval.

Kuehn's trial was secret, and first public accusations linking him with spy activities were made in a divorce action filed by the husband of Mrs. Kuehn's daughter, early in 1943.

Among belongings of the Kuehns which were auctioned off for \$14,746 were such items as antique Chinese screens and vases, fine silverware, diamonds, pearls, Persian and Chinese rugs, ermine scarves, teakwood furniture of every description, Leica and Zeiss cameras, motion picture cameras, daggers, swords and hunting knives.

Memorandum

Tolson ☒
 Belmont ☒
 Mohr ☒
 Callahan ☒
 Conrad ☒
 DeLoach ☒
 Evans ☒
 Malone ☒
 Rosen ☒
 Sullivan ☒
 Tavel ☒
 Trotter ☒
 Tele. Room ☒
 Holmes ☒
 Gandy ☒

TO : Mr. DeLoach

DATE: 8-2-62

FROM :

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
 HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
 DATE 9-3-86 BY SP5/PLS

SUBJECT: MRS. FRIEDEL KUEHN, aka.
 MRS. BERNARD JULIUS OTTO KUEHN

BACKGROUND:

The Honolulu Office, by letter of 7-25-62, has forwarded a newspaper clipping from the Honolulu "Star-Bulletin" of 7-24-62, which reveals that Mrs. Kuehn the widow of Nazi spy Otto Kuehn, is suing the United States Government for \$27,000 as "compensation for seizure and auctioning of their Hawaii property in 1945." It was indicated that she had engaged a Washington, D. C., attorney. The newspaper story about Mrs. Kuehn, who is now residing in Germany, characterizes her as a "broken woman of 70 living on a \$30 a month German old age pension." She claims she was persecuted by the FBI and her husband was convicted of a crime he never committed. She made other false accusations about the FBI with respect to the manner in which her family and her were treated after their arrest subsequent to the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 12-7-41. After setting forth Mrs. Kuehn's remarks, the Honolulu "Star-Bulletin" newspaper then set forth the more accurate account of the story of Otto Kuehn and his family based upon its newspaper files. It described Otto Kuehn's espionage activities prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the fact that he had confessed to the FBI some of his relationships with Japanese Government officials.

INFORMATION IN BUFILES:

[Bernard Julius Otto Kuehn and his wife Friedel were apprehended by military authorities in Honolulu on 12-8-41 at which time they were interned as dangerous enemy aliens.] The Bureau developed evidence of a sufficient nature to bring charges of espionage against Otto Kuehn. Inasmuch as Hawaii was under martial law at that time, Kuehn was tried by military commission. [He was found guilty and was sentenced to be executed; however, the sentence was subsequently commuted to 50 years imprisonment at hard labor.] Kuehn was transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on 11-20-42.

1 - Mr. DeLoach
 1 - Mr. Sullivan

(5)
 15 AUG 13 1962

15 AUG 8 1962

MCT-13

65-1574-3R

b6
b7c

Memo

RE: MRS. FRIEDEL KUEHN

The allegations contained in Mrs. Kuehn's recent statement about the Bureau were the subject of an investigation by the Office of Inspector General, United States Army, in 1944. This investigation contained no derogatory information about the conduct of FBI investigations and interviews with Otto Kuehn and his wife.

[REDACTED]

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.

b6
b7c

[Handwritten signature]
[Handwritten initials]

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO :

Mr. Tavel

DATE:

JUL 17 1967

FROM :

SUBJECT:

BERNARD JULIUS OTTO KUEHN
(TRANSFER OF PRISONER'S MAIL)
ESPIONAGE

Tolson _____
DeLoach _____
Mohr _____
Wick _____
Casper _____
Callahan _____
Conrad _____
Felt _____
Gale _____
Rosen _____
Sullivan _____
Tavel _____
Trotter _____
Tele. Room _____
Holmes _____
Gandy _____

Bulky Exhibit File Number: 65-1574-275

We are in the process of reviewing all bulky exhibits in order that we may dispose of those which serve no further purpose. Inasmuch as many of the bulky exhibits pertain to inactive cases and are occupying badly needed space, it is requested that the appropriate substantive supervisor review the above-listed bulky exhibit and render a decision as to its retention or disposition. A notation as to the decision reached may be placed on this memorandum. The memorandum should be returned to the Filing Unit of the Records Branch, Room 1116, Identification Building, for filing in the case file.

RECOMMENDATION:

That captioned bulky exhibit be reviewed and a decision rendered as to the retention or disposition of the material.

LWB:bjg

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 9-3-88 BY SP5/BJG

#268114

28 JUL 26 1967

*Above indicated
bulky exhibit must be
destroyed at 7/18/67*

4-LB

5-65-1574-

NOT RECORDED

186 JUL 26 1967

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO :

FROM :

SUBJECT :

**BERNARD JULIUS OTTO KUEHN
ESPIONAGE**

DATE:

Tolson _____
DeLoach _____
Mohr _____
Bishop _____
Casper _____
Callahan _____
Conrad _____
Felt _____
Gale _____
Rosen _____
Sullivan _____
Tavel _____
Trotter _____
Tele. Room _____
Holmes _____
Gandy _____

Bulky Exhibit File Number: **65-1574-299**

We are in the process of reviewing all bulky exhibits in order that we may dispose of those which serve no further purpose. Inasmuch as many of the bulky exhibits pertain to inactive cases and are occupying badly needed space, it is requested that the appropriate substantive supervisor review the above-listed bulky exhibit and render a decision as to its retention or disposition. A notation as to the decision reached may be placed on this memorandum. The memorandum should be returned to the Filing Unit of the Records Branch, Room 1116, Identification Building, for filing in the case file.

RECOMMENDATION:

That captioned bulky exhibit be reviewed and a decision rendered as to the retention or disposition of the material.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-3-80 BY [signature]

Destroyed 3/14/68
[signature]

65-1574
NOT RECORDED
MAR 14 1968

8 MAR 14 1968

*Lab. has
no objection
to destruction
3/5/68*

*7-3
5- [signature]*

4-43

August 18, 1971

REC- 32

65-1574-317

EX-100

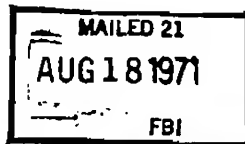
b6
b7c

Dear [REDACTED]

In reply to your letter of August 14th, Bernard Julius Otto Kuehn was deported to Germany in 1948. He died in Germany in 1956. His wife and daughter were repatriated to Germany on January 1, 1945.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover
Director



NOTE: [REDACTED] Bernard Julius Otto Kuehn and his wife were apprehended by military authorities in Honolulu on 12-8-41 at which time they were interned as dangerous enemy aliens. The Bureau developed evidence of a sufficient nature to bring charges of espionage against Otto Kuehn and he was tried by military commission in Hawaii. He was found guilty and was sentenced to be executed; however, the sentence was subsequently commuted to 50 years imprisonment at hard labor. He was transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on 11-20-42. (65-1574-316)

b6
b7c

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-3-80 BY SP5/BJB
#268714

- Tolson
- Felt
- Sullivan
- Mohr
- Bishop
- Brennan, C.D.
- Callahan
- Casper
- Conrad
- Dalbey
- Gale
- Ponder
- Rosen
- Tavel
- Walters
- Soyars
- Tele. Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

MAIL ROOM ☐ TELETYPE UNIT ☐

[REDACTED]

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

August 14, 1971

Dear Sir:

I am about to write for an American magazine
an article on Bernard J. O'Kuehn, who spied
for the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, was caught on
Pearl Harbor Day, and sentenced to 50 years at
hard labor (see release of Office of War
Information, New York Times, June 15, 1943).

me
Could you, please, tell/what became of
him and his family?

Very sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]

P.S. Until August 31, 1971, mail reaches me
at [REDACTED]

REC-32

65-1520-317

ack/nml
8-18-71
LEE: dij
nml

EX-100

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-3-86 BY [signature]

AUG 1971

College of Arts and Sciences
Department of History



September 3, 1974

United States Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Room 4706
10th and Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D. C. 20535

RECEIVED JULIUS OTTO KUEHN

First thank you for your time last Thursday morning.

In the rush of things to leave D.C. on time, the reminder to telephone you slipped by. Kindly accept my apology.

Via return mail, would you kindly advise the cost of the summaries of investigations of [redacted] and Otto Kuehn. Also, their relationship to the Kennedy Bill now in Senate - House Conference.

Again, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-4-86 BY SP-10/PLS
#268714

65-1574-318

NOT RECORDED
26 SEP 26 1974

62-9112

SEP 13 1974

ack by let
9-11-74
mccing

11-LEGAL COUNSEL

8057 ARLINGTON EXPRESSWAY
POST OFFICE BOX 17074
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32216
TELEPHONE 904-725-7730

ORIGINAL FILED IN 65-9112-223

September 12, 1974.

Dear [REDACTED]

This is to acknowledge your letter of September 3rd to [REDACTED], of our Freedom of Information Act Unit.

We have determined that the cost of making the summaries, consisting of a total of 41 pages, on [REDACTED] and Otto Kuehn available to you would be \$30. This includes stipulated fees for searching, processing, and duplication. As you are aware, a 25 percent deposit of \$7.50, payable by check or money order to the Treasurer of the United States, is required to begin processing.

Concerning your inquiry regarding the Kennedy bill now in conference, the language of exemption (b)(7) of Title 5, United States Code, Section 552, has not been agreed upon by the Congress. Under the current law, the deletions in the summaries will be minimal; therefore, we are not in a position to comment whether or not it would be to your advantage to wait for final Congressional action on the bill.

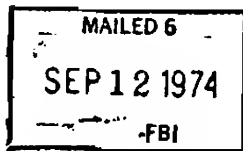
If you wish to have us process the summaries, please indicate in writing your willingness to pay the fee and enclose the required deposit.

Sincerely yours,

C. M. Kelley

Clarence M. Kelley
Director

Assoc. Dir. _____
Dep. AD Adm. _____
Dep. AD Inv. _____
Asst. Dir.: _____
Admin. _____
Comp. Syst. _____
Ext. Affairs _____
Files & Com. _____
Gen. Inv. _____
Ident. _____
Inspection _____
Intell. _____
Laboratory _____
Plan. & Eval. _____
Spec. Inv. _____
Training _____
Legal Coun. _____
Telephone Rm. _____



- 1 - The Deputy Attorney General - Enclosure
- 1 - Bufile 62-115530 (FOI-REPLIES)

SEE NOTE PAGE TWO

Section 7

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 9-4-80 BY SP5CJ/03

#268112

65-9112-

REC-48

65-1574-318.

ORIGINAL IN 65-9112-223

b6
b7c

[REDACTED]

He had also requested information on Otto Kuehn, on whom no record was located. During a visit to the FOIA Unit on 8-29-74, he advised the correct spelling was Kuehn. Otto Kuehn, German national residing in Hawaii, was charged and convicted for espionage activities in behalf of the Japanese Government prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor (65-1574).